

BLUES IMPRESS IN FRIENDLY

FIELDING four newcomers, Wycombe Wanderers turned in an impressive performance that promised much for the new season, in their first public friendly at Loakes Park on Monday night against Oxford United, from the Football League, Division Two.

The four new faces in question were Alan Phillips, Howard Kennedy, Richard Wilkes and Keith Griffiths. Of the quartet Kennedy immediately caught the eye. Playing on the left of the mid-field three, he looked a class player, after his first touch of the ball and his distribution was of the highest quality. It seemed as though he had been a regular member of last year's side — so well did he knit into the team.

With the distinct possibility that Larry Pritchard has left the club for Sutton, Kennedy appears to be the ideal replacement. Alan Phillips is no stranger to regular Wycombe fans. The Hendon centre half for a number of years, he wore the number five shirt on Monday and gave a competent performance. His centre back partner was Keith Mead, which meant Dave Bullock was forced to switch to left back.

Keith Griffiths, a Watford Youth player, was between the posts. First impressions were fair but his lack of inches could prove troublesome and he was seldom under any pressure. Wilkes only came on in the later stages of the game but looked a very determined player — especially inside the penalty area. One pleasing aspect was his ability to get to the bye-line and cross the ball when tightly marked.

These four were blended with many of last year's team, the only major absentees being Pritchard and Roger Grant. Several of the players who have been training with the Blues — Steve Perrin, John Hutchinson and Graham Mackenzie to name three — were not played but watched the game.

There was only one disappointment among last year's regulars. Tony Price, a highly talented player, tended to hang on to the ball too long when scoring chances were imminent and he did not figure as well as his colleagues.

The rest of the familiar faces all turned in performances one has grown to expect of them. Upright Tony Horseman and Keith Searle looked good for many goals this term, while Dylan Evans — a second half substitute — also impressed. In midfield Phil Wood worked

Wycombe Wanderers 2, Oxford United 1

busily and put in some neat headed flicks while Mick Holifield's pace again stood out.

The defence, if it can be kept together, looked the basis of another fine side. Mead and Phillips were highly dependable at the back while Paul Birdseye and Bullock fought extremely hard and were seldom beaten. All in all the team showed a good deal of promise.

Oxford fielded only one regular first team player — Jim Light, the right back. Several of the others had first team experience but in general United looked a workmanlike side lacking individual skill. One man with plenty of talent, however, was goalkeeper Gallacher. He produced the save of the match after 12 minutes.

Kennedy picked up possession

on half way and ran 30 yards into Oxford territory. Although having a good shooting chance himself, he slipped the ball to Horseman on his right. "Bodger" got all his power behind a fierce drive but Gallacher managed to tip the ball over from point blank range.

There were few clear cut opportunities throughout the 90 minutes but Horseman almost made the most of a half chance after 35 minutes when his determination took him through for a shot which beat Gallacher but hit the side netting. In the 43rd minute Wanderers went one up. Horseman's corner on the top side was half cleared to Mead who lashed the ball goalwards only to see full back Flay block his shot on the line. Horseman collected the ball and spotted Searle lurking in

side the six yard box. With real precision, he crossed over the defence for Searle to nod home his first goal of the season.

Oxford began the half well but against a resilient Wanderers defence, they were given virtually no scoring chances whatsoever. In the 56th minute they found themselves two down.

Searle put Holifield through on his favourite left foot just inside the box and although Mick's shot beat the goalkeeper, it struck the upright and bounced right into the path of Evans. Dylan made no mistake from 10 yards.

Oxford's goal came in the 65th minute. Griffiths failed to cut out a long cross and the ball was flighted over the penalty area again for substitute McFarlane to volley home. Evans and Searle both went close for Wycombe before the final whistle.

WYCOMBE: K. Griffiths; P. Birdseye, K. Mead, A. Phillips, D. Bullock; H. Kennedy, P. Wood (sub T. Reardon 57 mins.), M. Holifield; A. Horseman (sub. 64 mins.), K. Searle, A. Price (sub D. Evans 45 mins.).

OXFORD: G. Gallacher (sub Miller 75 mins.); J. Light, N. Lowe, A. Bodel, S. Flay; K. Gough (sub L. Taylor 71 mins.), S. Aylett, W. Jeffrey; G. Bray, P. Foley, J. Campbell (sub McFarlane 57 mins.).



Steve Perrin (right) challenges one of the Didcot defenders in Saturday's friendly at Bisham Abbey.

IN their first friendly of the season on Saturday, Wanderers had few problems in beating Hellenic Leaguers Didcot 4-0. Steve Perrin headed home a corner to put the Blues one up and Wilks made it 2-0 before half time.

Wilks, who played for Cheltenham last term, added the third goal in the second half and Tony Price completed the scoring near the close. Several of last year's team missed the game — played behind closed doors at Bisham Abbey — due to holidays, amongst them Paul Birdseye, Terry Reardon, Mick Holifield and Tony Horseman.

THERE will be several familiar faces in the Wimbledon side that visits Loakes Park tomorrow night (Wednesday) for Wycombe Wanderers' second public friendly. Last year's Walton and Hersham manager Allen Batsford took over the 'Dons' in June and he had three of his old team with him. Dave Bassett, Billy Edwards and Dave Donaldson have all joined while last year's Hendon spearhead, Keiron Somers and Roger Connell, who are also ex-Walton players, should also play.

They will be teaming up with Mick Mahon the former Colchester forward, who joined the club mid-way through last season.